

'Unbelievably unqualified'

Doctor called unfit to judge JFK data

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By Larry S. Finley

The long-suppressed photographs and X-rays of John F. Kennedy's body have become the center of renewed medical controversy over the assassination.

Dr. John K. Lattimer, the first private physician to see the medical evidence, says it confirms the Warren Commission's finding that Kennedy was shot from behind and above by one man.

But one of the nation's leading experts on gunshot wounds has challenged Lattimer's qualifications to make judgments from the medical evidence.

Dr. Cyril H. Wecht, president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, told The Daily News that he considers Dr. Lattimer "unbelievably unqualified" in the field of forensic pathology.

THE 65 photographs and X-rays are locked up in the National Archives in Washington, under an agreement between the Kennedy family and the government.

In 1966, the Kennedy autopsy documents were placed in the National Archives with the agreement that expert pathologists could see them after five years for "scholarly" purposes. Lattimer is the first to be allowed to see the material.

"I don't know what in the world possessed this fellow Lattimer to have the arrogance, the affrontery, to proj-

ect himself into this as a reviewer, as an evaluator of a complex medical nature," Dr. Wecht said.

"I'm amazed that anyone would accept Dr. Lattimer as an expert in pathology. That isn't even his field. He's a urologist, a kidney-and-bladder man. By definition this is a guy who never moves above the belly button."

DR. WECHT, who also has requested to see the Kennedy photographs, is coroner of Allegheny County in Pennsylvania and an expert in forensic medicine, which includes gunshot wounds as they apply to law.

Dr. Lattimer is chairman of the urology department at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons, and has written numerous articles on the medical aspects of the assassination.

Dr. Wecht said he didn't know why Dr. Lattimer's request to see the autopsy information was granted before his own and those of three other pathologists.

He said it might be significant that the four pathologists were all critical of the Warren Commission's handling of medical evidence, while Dr. Lattimer's writings supported the government findings.

DR. LATTIMER said the autopsy results show that a bullet passed through the President's throat at a downward angle and that the right, rear

section of Kennedy's head was partly destroyed by another bullet.

Critics of the official government version of the assassination contend that the President wasn't killed by Lee Harvey Oswald alone and that at least one other assassin fired from in front of the President's motorcade as it moved through Dallas, on Nov. 22, 1963.

In 1968, then-Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark selected four physicians to examine the evidence. Their conclusions were basically the same as those of Dr. Lattimer.

AN APPARENT difference between Dr. Lattimer's account and the previous examination of evidence is the entry point of the nonfatal bullet that passed through Kennedy's neck.

Dr. Lattimer said in an interview with the New York Times that the entry wound of this bullet was higher up the neck and that the bullet traveled at a greater downward angle than indicated by Warren Commission drawings. The Times account was published Sunday.

The physicians appointed by Clark looked at the same evidence and concluded that "the . . . bullet struck the decedent's back at the right side of the base of the neck between the shoulder and the spine and merged from the front of his neck near the midline."